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SUBJECT: FALLUJAH UPDATE

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Robert Gilchrist for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: PRT officials met with Fallujah leaders Mayor Jassim, Fallujah City Council (FCC) Secretary Abbas and Iraqi Police Chief Colonel Karim at the Fallujah IP District Headquarters 25 on November 25. They noted that the sectarian violence in Baghdad would likely lead to a greater influx of displaced Sunni families. Fallujah leaders echoed that ongoing sectarianism would create trouble in Fallujah for the mostly Shia Iraqi Army (IA)units.

It appears that there is an anti-extremist backlash in Fallujah, with Abbas telling PRT officials that Fallujans had decided to become more active in countering local extremist/terrorist activities. Coalition Forces (CF) and the IA report improvements in IA performance and Ministry of Defense (MOD) logistical support; however the IA remains dependent on CF for many staples.  
End Summary.

¶2. (C) In recent weeks, Marines estimate that approximately 30-40 IDPs have sought refuge daily in Anbar's gated community. All agreed that contingency plans were needed should the anticipated IDP inflow increase dramatically. (Note: under the current arrangement, IDPs are sponsored by Fallujan residents and forms are verified/approved by the IP. No families from within Al Anbar are allowed entry, only those from outside the province ? with most coming from Baghdad. End Note). Abbas stated flatly that IDPs were a "reality" until sectarianism in Baghdad was reduced.

¶3. (C) Fallujah leaders echoed that ongoing sectarianism would create trouble in Fallujah for IA units. The current mood had increased tension among residents; if sectarianism in Baghdad lessened, IA units (dominantly Shia) would be better received. If not, planned handover of security responsibilities would become complicated and be undermined. Abbas stressed that more Iraqi Security Force units were needed in Fallujah should Coalition Forces numbers be reduced, "two or three times at least." City leaders registered strong concerns about the growing power of militias, which remained the main problem. Col Karim noted that the planned movement of a special police battalion to Fallujah had been put on hold, due to the volatile situation in the capital.

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A FALLUJAH "AWAKENING"  
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¶4. (C) Abbas said that Fallujans, like others in the province, had decided to become more active in countering extremist/terrorist activities. He said that area residents had increasingly realized that the terrorists offered them nothing. When asked about Ramadi initiatives (tribes, Sheikh Sattar, etc), Abbas said that Fallujans were doing "even more." In the last Fallujah City Council session, however, he had opted not to publicly flag this shift. Col Karim told PRT Officials privately that in recent days, five terrorists had been killed in the city. He would not elaborate if the new police unit had been directly involved, but implied as much.

¶5. (C) Mayor Jassim, FCC Secretary, Mr. Abbas, and IP chief, Col Karim, said that they had been told a female had been taken by individuals in IA uniforms, reportedly the sister of an IA soldier. They did not have further information, but requested that we contact IA leadership. So far, they were unaware of any demonstrations or civil unrest. (Note: In the past, some of the most explosive incidents have stemmed from local reaction to the arrest of females. In autumn 2005, a female was temporarily detained by units associated with CF - which led to significant disruptions in local governance and unrest in the city. End Note.)

¶6. (C) During a brief stop at OP Gold, the Military Transition Team leader said that he had seen improvements in IA performance. He noted that supplies from MOD had also increased, even if they were still lacking overall. The IA company commander, Captain Hussein, noted that uniforms were now being issued, whereas before IA soldiers had to use their own funds to buy them. That said, they still lacked a sufficient number for all of his men. Hussein added that the new MOD had made some improvements in overall logistical support, but it was clear that the IA remained dependent on CF for many staples.  
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